

# Heart

## *The Beginning of Sin*

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## Heart – the Beginning of Sin

In the OT, the word *heart* is often used to refer to the totality of a person's mental life. It basically governs a person's intellectual, emotional, volitional, and even the physical variables of a person's inner life. Indeed, even imaginations originate in the *heart*. It may also be regarded as one's "conscience."<sup>1</sup> This same ideology is used in the NT, although space for this article does not lend itself for citing specific instances in either the OT or NT.

So, as the center piece of one's will, emotions, intentions, and even one's decision making concerns, the *heart* is more significant than simply the organ which pumps blood throughout the body. Whether though inner impulses or external influences, the *heart* may be regarded as the source from which and the channel through which life is experienced and expressed.

Proverbs 23:7 – "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." That is, a person's thinking produces what he/she is in terms of actions and emotions. Human beings are F (Feeling) A (Acting) T (Thinking) organisms. The seedbed for our feelings and actions originate in our thinking patterns.

One of the words for *sin* in the NT is **hamartia**. This word refers to "missing the mark of God's design; a deviation from or distortion of thinking patterns which honor and make God's presence a reality in one's life." Stahlin<sup>2</sup> states "it is almost always a matter of 'offence in relation to God with emphasis on guilt'; distance from God and opposition to Him." Grundmann<sup>3</sup> notes "that essentially sin is the rejection of the claim of God by self-assertive man." He further notes that "the individual is always in this all-embracing state of sin."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Burke, D. G. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol 2. p. 652.

<sup>2</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol 1, p. 295.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Arndt and Gingrich<sup>5</sup> state that sin is “every departure fr. the way of righteousness, both human and divine . . . the power that deceives men and leads them to destruction.” Thayer<sup>6</sup> regards it as “*an error* of the understanding whether it occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action.”

With this perspective and understanding, it is easy to see that sin begins in the heart and is, therefore, a sort of *mental illness*. In fact, when this word and a host of other words in the NT for sin are explored and explained, it is clearly seen that any and all manifestations of sin in behaviors and emotions actually find their origin in the heart or the center of one’s thinking patterns.

No wonder the Psalmist cried out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). We would do well to often echo those same sentiments!

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<sup>5</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 42-43.

<sup>6</sup> *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 30.